<u>REMARKS</u>

<u>Summary of Office Action</u>

Claims 1-20 and 35-40 are pending in this application.

Claims 13 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to point out and distinctly claim the subject matter with applicants regard as the invention.

Claims 1-4, 6-8, 10, 17-18 and 35-40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Logan et al. PCT publication No. WO 00/15259 ("Logan").

Claims 1-7, 11-15, and 17-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Sancoff et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,682,540 ("Sancoff").

Claims 19-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sancoff in view of Scholz et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,273,912 ("Scholz").

Claims 9 and 16 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

<u>Reply to the 35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejection</u>

Claims 13 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

In particular, the Examiner contended that the limitation "the plurality of inside-retention members" of claim 13 lacks sufficient antecedent basis. In response, applicants have amended claim 13 to depend from claim 6, which provides proper antecedent basis for the limitation "the plurality of inside-retention members."

The Examiner also contended that the limitations "the loading tool" and "the cannulation" of claim 36 lack sufficient antecedent basis. In response, applicants have

amended claim 36 to depend from claim 37, and have amended the limitation "the cannulation" to "a cannulation" to provide proper antecedent basis for the limitations of claim 36.

For at least the foregoing reasons, applicants respectfully submit that as amended, claims 13 and 36 are patentable over 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Reply to the 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 Rejections

Claims 1-4, 6-8, 10, 17-18 and 35-40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Logan. Claims 1-7, 11-15, and 17-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Sancoff. Claims 19-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sancoff in view of Scholz. Claims 9 and 16 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Although applicants continue to believe that independent claim 1, as originally filed, is patentable over Logan and Sancoff, in the interest of accelerating prosecution, applicants have amended independent claim 1 to include the limitations of objected to claim 9 and intervening claim 7.

Applicants have therefore canceled claims 7 and 9, and amended claims 8 and 10-15 to revise the dependencies of the dependent claims.

Applicants respectfully submit that neither Logan, Sancoff, nor Scholz, whether taken alone or in combination, show or suggest applicants' claimed feature of a connector assembly that includes "an outside-retention element configured to annularly engage the exterior surface of the graft tissue conduit about the opening, wherein the outside-retention element is hingedly coupled to the distal portion of the body," as recited in amended claim 1.

For at least the foregoing reasons, applicants submit that claims 1-6, 8, 10-15, 17-20 and 35-40 are allowable over Logan, Sancoff and Scholz. Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 1-6, 8, 10-15, 17-20 and 35-40 be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, claims 1-6, 8, 10-15, 17-20 and 35-40 are in condition for allowance. This application is therefore in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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